



Vol. 10 No. 4

# THE CEDAR TREE

## Newsnotes from The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon

P. O. Box 13423, Pittsburgh, PA 15243 (412) 561-0455

[www.hsmtl.org](http://www.hsmtl.org)

WINTER 2008

**PRESIDENT'S LETTER** - 2007 was a busy year for The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon. So it's time we look back, sum up, and send out some thank yous.

The Society hosted its regular **five free public programs** at Mt. Lebanon Library—with topics ranging from the re-enactor's view of the French and Indian War and Pontiac's Rebellion to a slideshow history of Mt. Washington's Chatham Village. We also presented **three exhibits** at the library—the photograph exhibit "Things that Aren't There Anymore" in the spring and the displays "The Old Man's Army" in July and "Christmas in a Dickens Village" in December. Thanks to Wally Workmaster and Shirley McGinniss respectively for sharing their collections with us, as well as to board member Lynn Banbury for arranging the holiday exhibit. Former board member Kent Miller receives kudos for setting up the photograph exhibit—with the help of Society trustee Dick Price and former trustee Clarence Betzler—and for his other photography-related assistance.

This past summer, the Society sent representatives to many of Washington Road's **First Friday** and **Sidewalk Saturday** events and to the **Fourth of July festivities** in Mt. Lebanon Park. Thanks to everyone who took a turn manning the booth and all of you who stopped to chat. Society members also participated in the **Memorial Day Parade** (thanks to Dave Redding for driving us in his 1960 Chevy Impala) and the community's **Halloween parade**. Former president Karen Cahall presented several talks to local groups and organizations, and we thank Karen for those very well received programs. Several board members also participated as tour guides for the second grade public school **walking tours of the Washington Road** business district in the spring, an event the Society co-sponsors with Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, Mt. Lebanon Public Library, and the Mt. Lebanon School District.

In the spring we presented our sixth **annual history book award** to Mt. Lebanon junior Maria Grinko. Thanks to Huntington (formerly Sky) Bank on Cochran Road and manager John McDonough for sponsoring the award.

Our **note cards** continue to sell well, and we thank all the storeowners (see list on page 4) for helping us with this project, and board member Marty Carney for working with the storeowners.

We continued to collect **oral histories**. Thanks to everyone who suggested a subject, the people we interviewed, and to the committee—Marty Carney, Lori Humphreys, Maggie McDermott, Virginia Nicklas, and Mel Bickel—for preserving the community's past in such a first-hand and intimate manner.

Our **home history project** has been a big success. Thanks to board member Lori Humphreys for starting this project—in which residents can come to the library to learn about the history of their homes—and board member Wilma Novogradac for assisting. To sign up, see page 4.

Special thanks go out to Anne Kemerer, who maintained our membership rolls and created program flyers for several years, and to Jehnie Reis for stepping up when Anne stepped down. Thanks to Mel and Maxine Bickel for agreeing to take over the program and newsletter mailings in 2008, and to Wally Workmaster for planning the programming for the last nine years. Wally did a wonderful job of bringing us interesting and enlightening speakers. Thanks to Lori Humphreys for taking over that committee. Also thank you, Lori, for being the Society's treasurer for four years and to Bill Simpson for taking over this year. Last year, Bill oversaw the audit process conducted by Robert Mitsch.

Thanks to board member Wilma Novogradac for heading the Hospitality Committee, as well as the Mount Lebanon Library for opening their meeting rooms to the Society for board meetings and public

programs. A really big thanks to everyone who donated an item(s) to the Society's collection last year.

And a final shout-out to Dick Price for being an excellent secretary and for creating the great signs used in the Halloween parade; newsletter editor Jeanné Heid Bereznicki for her wonderful job putting these pages together every three months; and Ginny Nicklas for her work as corresponding secretary.

And to everyone I inadvertently forgot—thank you. Here's to another successful year.

**M.A. Jackson**

### **HISTORY CENTER UPDATE**

In 2007, the Society made great strides in finding a location for a History Center, which we hope to open this summer. The space we have identified is located in the three basement rooms of the stucco house on the corner of Washington Road and Lebanon Avenue—known by some as the McMillan house and by others as the old Mt. Lebanon tax office building.

We are currently working on obtaining an insurance policy and, once that is in place, will have a lease drawn up. By early spring we should be able to start moving in, however, it will take several months to prepare the space, move in our collection, and set up displays and exhibits.

A History Center costs money, and we are very grateful to the Mt. Lebanon Commission for the \$5,000 subsidy they presented the Society for 2008. This money will cover the Center's rent.

The Society has also applied for a Department of Community and Economic Development grant through State Representative Matt Smith's office; State Senator John Pippy is supporting the grant. If the grant is awarded, it will be used to buy computer equipment for the Center. We have also applied for a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Many thanks to the staff at Smith and Pippy's offices for assisting with the grant proposals, and to Terri Blanchette at the Heinz History Center for her advice. We will run History Center progress reports in future issues of the Cedar Tree.

### **CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE**

The Society's Web site is [www.hsmtl.org](http://www.hsmtl.org). It contains old pictures, information about upcoming events, some of our old newsletters, and other interesting facts. And please be sure to sign our **Guestbook!**

### **RECENT DONATIONS**

#### **From the Dormont Historical Society:**

- 1957 newspaper advertisement for Lupovitz Furniture at 632 Washington Road
- A 1952 ad for Mt. Lebanon Motors at 2950 Banksville Road
- Copied pages from The Liberty Ledger (undated) featuring a picture of the Algeo Apartment Building on Washington Road
- Copied advertisement from 1928 for the General Stenographic Bureau
- Undated program for the Mt. Lebanon Baseball Club
- 1999 Mt. Lebanon Guide and Directory issued by The Almanac
- "The Cathedral in the South Hills" booklet about St Bernard Church issued in 1969
- Mt. Lebanon High School class of 1951 commencement program
- Undated newspaper clipping of Howe Elementary School 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher Adele Blayney
- Black & white photo taken in 1955 of Adele Blayney & three unidentified women in NJ.

#### **Lori Humphreys:**

- Land development plans for Washington Park Condominiums and Main Line Plan #3
- A Community with Character DVD

#### **M.A. Jackson:**

- 4 issues (1 year) of Pittsburgh History Magazine from 1989
- "A Guidebook to Historic Western Pennsylvania" by George Swetnam and Helen Smith
- "Pittsburgh: The Story of a City" by Leland Baldwin
- "Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City" by Stefan Lorant
- "Helen Clay Frick: Bittersweet Heiress" by Martha Frick Symington Sanger

#### **Maxine Bickel**

- Notes from a speech she presented about the history of Mt. Lebanon and its residents

#### **Anatol "Tony" Rychalski:**

- A statue created out of old steelwork molds (featured in the December 2007 issue of Mt. Lebanon magazine).

We thank everyone for passing on these wonderful pieces of Mt. Lebanon's past.

## **SEEKING THE HISTORY OF THE DENIS THEATER**

We are looking for a history buff who would like to do some research on the Denis Theatre, in Uptown Mt. Lebanon, for a possible history booklet. This would include the history of the building itself (construction, renovations, etc.), ownership changes, and interesting or significant events that occurred there over the years. In addition, we believe that the Denis Theatre, built in 1937, has played a role in the lives of many in Mt. Lebanon—a place where they got their first kiss, had their first date, went with their aunt every Sunday—and we would like to include many of these wonderful anecdotes in this history.

If you are interested in researching history, interviewing residents for their anecdotes, collecting old photographs or writing text, please contact Anne Kemerer, at [kemanne@msn.com](mailto:kemanne@msn.com).

## **PLEASE RENEW**

As many of you know, The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon's membership year runs January 1 to December 31. With that in mind, we mailed out membership renewal forms in December. If you received one, please take a moment to fill it out and return it. By doing so now, you'll save the Society the cost to send a reminder letter. If you did not receive a membership renewal letter, you might have signed up late in 2007. If that's the case, surprise! You've received a few free months and won't receive a membership renewal letter until December 2008. If you think you've been missed, you can fill out the form in this newsletter, download a membership form on our website ([www.hsmtl.org](http://www.hsmtl.org)), or call Jehnie Reis at 412-341-0453 to check on your membership status.

## **THANK YOU TO NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS – SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER, 2007**

Margaret Hendrix – Senior (Renewal)  
Casey & Liz Mechael – Family (New)  
Jeanne & Scotti Mulert – Benefactor (Renewal)  
Louise Sturgess – Individual (Renewal)  
Jehnie Reis – Individual (New)  
Jane Morton – Family (Renewal)  
Barbara B. Cusick – Individual (Renewal)  
Albert & Dominga Schnupp – Family (Renewal)  
William M. McGrane – Individual (New)  
Kent S. Miller – Benefactor (Renewal)  
Ardeth A. Tennyson – Individual (Renewal)  
Nellie Ambrose – Individual (Renewal)  
Hale Holden, Jr. – Family (Renewal)

## **New and Renewing Members (cont'd)**

Marilyn Freed – Individual (Renewal)  
Bette M. Ruh – Senior (Renewal)  
David & Charlotte Borland – Family (Renewal)  
Dr. J. A. Bevilacqua – Individual (Renewal)  
Elaine W. London – Individual (Renewal)  
Richard & Barbara Meharey – Family (Renewal)  
Dr. & Mrs. George C. Smith – Benefactor (Renewal)  
Richard C. Walker – Senior (Renewal)  
Dr. & Mrs. David McKibben – Family (Renewal)  
Luetta Waddell – Senior (Renewal)  
Gertrude McCrum – Senior (Renewal)  
Toni Murray – Individual (Renewal)  
Chris & Anne Kemerer – Family (Renewal)  
E.J. McClain, Jr., M.D. – Senior (Renewal)  
George W. Gula – Individual (Renewal)  
Thomas L. Stevenson – Individual (Renewal)  
Jean T. Atutes – Senior (New)  
Rita M. Roegge – Senior (Renewal)  
Elaine Wertheim – Benefactor (Renewal)  
Audrey & Kenneth Menke – Family (Renewal)  
Michael F. Lacy – Individual (Renewal)  
Eleanor M. Thomas – Senior (Renewal)  
Foster A. Sisson – Individual (Renewal)  
Barbara Jucha – Individual (Renewal)  
George & Barbara Schoeppner – Benefactor (Renewal)  
Lori Humphreys – Individual (Renewal)  
Marty Carney – Individual (Renewal)  
Jeanné Heid Bereznicki – Individual (Renewal)  
Paul & Sylvia Garlitz – Family (Renewal)  
Matthew J. Ragan Individual (Renewal)  
William F. Lewis – Community Pioneers (Renewal)

## **RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS:**

### **Life Memberships - The Green & White**

Mary Ann Depalma Burnett  
Mr. & Mrs. David Fasulo  
The Donald D. Mateer Foundation, c/o Charlotte M. Stephenson, Trustee –The Green & the White  
Glenn Morrow  
Virginia Nicklas  
Bertha Abbott Thomas

### **Benefactors: - Community Pioneers**

Beatrice Finke  
Ruth G. Foltz  
William Lewis  
Barbara and Robert Logan  
Mr. & Mrs. James B. Lutz  
Maggie McDermott  
Kent S. Miller

**Benefactors – Community Pioneers (cont'd)**

Jeanne & Scotti Mulert  
Wilma Novogradac  
Cynthia & Jerome Richey  
George & Barbara Schoepner  
C. Bryson Schreiner  
William J. & Kathleen Simpson  
Mr. & Mrs. George C. Smith  
Elaine Wertheim  
Wallace F. Workmaster

**MEETING REVIEW** After the conclusion of the business portion of our Annual Meeting on November 7, 2007, members and guests enjoyed a program concerning the care and research of historic houses and properties. Lori Humphreys presented invaluable information on how to discover the history of your home. The hand-outs included how to do a Title Search, find the deed to your home listing each time your property was sold, finding the age of your home, where to find its building permit, etc. Just a reminder, Lori is available to help you in this regard (see the following article on researching the history of your home). Following Lori, a presentation by Tara Merenda from the REN Plan informed us on the practical aspects of getting assistance for renovation work. If you plan to make renovations to your home and want to keep its architectural character, you should contact REN Plan, a non-profit organization, who can help you in this effort at a lower cost. They are located at 945 Liberty Avenue, Downtown Pittsburgh (412-391-4333).

**RESEARCH THE HISTORY OF YOUR MOUNT LEBANON HOME!**

Ever wondered who built your home? Ever wondered who designed the original plans? With the value of the architecture and design of Mt. Lebanon homes – most built in the early years of the last century – being rediscovered and recognized, the Historical Society of Mt. Lebanon is joining with the Mt. Lebanon Public Library to assist residents in finding out who built and designed their homes. Because the records are fragile and irreplaceable, Historical Society trustee and Cultural Resource Survey volunteer Lori Humphreys and Society Trustee Wilma Novogradac will be at the library twice each month to help you research the information. Please call the library at 412-531-1912 to make an appointment as the schedule may change. NOTE: If your house was built before 1924, there will **not** be a

Building Permit Number, which makes obtaining the information about your home more difficult to find.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR –**

**UPCOMING PROGRAM DATES:**

**The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon's free public programs for 2008 are:**

**January 23** "Life in a Pennsylvania Coal Patch" presented by Pamela Nixon.

**March 26** – "History of the Pennsylvania Training School at Morganza" presented by Dr. James T. Herron, Jr., prominent Canonsburg historian.

**May 21** – "The Skyscrapers of Pittsburgh" presented by John Conti.

**September 24** – To be announced.

**November 5** (annual meeting) AND "Women of Westsylvania in Story and Song" presented by Paula Purnell.

All programs begin at 7:30 p.m., at Mt. Lebanon Library, 16 Castle Shannon Boulevard. Refreshments will be served.

**NOTE CARDS FOR SALE**

The Society is selling sets of eight note cards featuring different buildings and scenes of Mt. Lebanon for \$10 a box. Local artists drew the sketches, and all funds benefit the Society.

Cards are being sold at **Josephine's** on Castle Shannon Boulevard, **Planet Art Gallery** on Washington Road, **Blooming Dahlia** on Beverly Road, **Mt. Lebanon Public Library** on Castle Shannon Boulevard, **Mt. Lebanon Pharmacy** on Mt. Lebanon Boulevard, and **Borders Books and Music** in Norman Centre. Our thanks to the shop owners for helping us with this fundraiser. Cards will also be sold at Society programs.

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY ON GIVELINE**

Do you shop online? If so, check out Giveline ([www.giveline.com](http://www.giveline.com)). Giveline is similar to Amazon.com in that you can purchase books, music, DVDs, video games, electronics, kitchen items, wine, pet supplies, and even book vacations. Every order generates a financial contribution to your favorite charity—between 7 and 33 percent of product sales goes to the selected organization, with a storewide average of nearly 16 percent per transaction. So whether you are buying a gift or purchasing something for yourself, go to Giveline and select The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon as your choice to receive a donation.

## **HISTORICAL SOCIETY TRUSTEES**

Welcome to David Borland, who started a three-year term with the Society on January 1.

M.A. Jackson, president  
Mel Bickel  
David Borland  
Marty Carney, vice president  
Lori Humphreys  
Bill Simpson, treasurer  
Maggie McDermott  
Dick Price, secretary  
Virginia Nicklas  
Lynn Geyer Banbury  
Wilma Novogradac  
Jeanné Heid Bereznicki  
Wally Workmaster

### **“Ski Mt. Lebanon!”**

by Wallace F. Workmaster

*An inquiry from local resident and avid skier Paul Cline in September, 2007, about a “Lost Resort” in Mount Lebanon, about which he had read in the Society’s membership brochure, led to the following information from Bud Stevenson, the original operator of the ski slope located on the present 23-acre site of the Bower Hill Apartments and Condominiums at 1150 – 1170 Bower Hill Road, during the early 1960’s, thanks to interview contacts provided by Frank Haller, Jack Haller, and M. A. Jackson. The recreational facilities discussed are well remembered by a number of older Mount Lebanon residents, but accurate details have been lacking until this point.*

Bud Stevenson was a local resident with an idea in the early 1960’s. He was a ski instructor and member of the Ski Patrol at Seven Springs who worked for advertising agency and was convinced that other residents of Mount Lebanon and the Pittsburgh area in general would welcome a short ski run on the site of the St. Clair Driving Range operated by Lou Fabian on part of a former farm on Bower Hill Road during warmer months of the year.

The property is shown in old plat books to have been owned by P. J. McArdle, thus confirming Bud’s memory; however, given the year of death involved, it’s doubtful if this land was a part of the estate of Pittsburgh City Councilman Peter J. McArdle (1874 – 1940), who perhaps was best known to Pittsburghers as the person for whom a roadway up

the face of Mt. Washington, opened in 1928, had been named. It may be that this owner was a descendant or other family member, perhaps an attorney, who may have shared that name or initials. The land for the ski slope had to be leased directly. Fabian’s lease apparently only covered the months when his golf driving range was in operation.

Bud previously had discussed his idea with his wife and with Jean Lamb, a teacher at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind. Ms. Lamb, in particular, felt that sight-impaired children who naturally have a remarkable sense of balance would benefit from the outdoor experience afforded by a short, straight ski run without intervening physical obstacles. They could be transported to and from the site by bus.

Because the proposed ski lift was a non-conforming use under Mt. Lebanon’s zoning restrictions, agreement not only had to be reached with Lou Fabian for use of the night lighting fixtures originally erected for the golf driving range, but also with the McArdle interest as owner of the property, and the Mount Lebanon Board of Commissioners, which readily granted a variance.

Bud named his new business the Mt. Lebanon Ski Center.

The 600-foot long rope tow, with a large pulley and counterweight at its lower end, was powered by a Model 8N Ford tractor. A trailer from the Dick Corporation was used for ski rentals. The same off-street parking beyond the curb of Bower Hill Road which was used by the golf driving range at other times of the year served the Mt. Lebanon Ski Center. Operation was begun in 1961 and continued for three seasons.

A 1993 USGS topographic map prepared well after the construction of the present three apartment and condominium buildings on the site shows a present drop in elevation from 1,180 feet above sea level at the side of Bower Hill Road to 1,040 or 1,060 feet above sea level at what probably were the extreme practical or possible limits for a ski slope, thus representing a drop of 120 to 140 feet in elevation; however, to achieve the maximum drop a turn to the left would have been necessary at the bottom end of the slope. The original intent appears to have been for a straight descent.

Without consulting older USGS topographic maps, it’s not possible to determine what changes in contours were made at the time the present residential buildings, access roads, two swimming pools, a pool

building, and tennis courts were constructed, although the impression is that the site may retain something of the general slope it may have exhibited when it originally was farmland.

Others who helped in the establishment and operation of the ski slope in Mount Lebanon included: Phil Dupre, a part-owner of Seven Springs; a Mr. Brady who operated the ski rental shop in the trailer; and Irwin and Madeline Fuchs, certified ski instructors, who left Seven Springs and operated a ski school at the Mount Lebanon slope. Bud Stevenson and his wife were the overall operators of the facility.

Gracie's, a roadside establishment on the opposite site of Bower Hill Road demolished a few years ago to make way for a more modern commercial development, sold hot chocolate and other refreshments to skiers in need of restoring warmth after an hour or two on the slope.

There's no record that any of the students from the Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind took advantage of the refreshments offered at Gracie's, but they certainly enjoyed and benefited from the unique outdoor experience that the Mt. Lebanon Ski Center afforded, as did thousands of other residents of Mt. Lebanon and the Pittsburgh area. It proved to be an excellent place for novices and more experienced skiers to try out new skills or equipment. Bud recalls that some people who had been skeptical of his proposal were amazed by its success.

Mt. Lebanon Ski Center depended upon naturally occurring snow which proved somewhat problematic. While Bud says that the best natural snow for skiing occurs during late March or early April, it was not an altogether reliable source. Vigorous objections from a resident of the residential portion of Scott Township which adjoins the lower end of the ski slope site to possible noise generated by artificial snowmaking equipment prevented local governmental approval of its purchase and use.

Bud very kindly has temporarily loaned what appears to be the only surviving copy of a "Ski Mt. Lebanon" poster advertising the local ski center to be photocopied for the collections of The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon. After a digital color image has been made by Photography Committee Chairman Kent S. Miller, the original poster will be returned to hang in Bud's recreation room, a vivid reminder of a now-vanished part of Mount Lebanon's past.

Unfortunately, no surviving photographs of the Mt. Lebanon Ski Center and its slope or tow presently are known to exist, although they may be in someone's photo album or an old shoebox. Anyone who thinks they might have one may contact Wally Workmaster at 412-278-2272 to make arrangements for it to be examined. Photographs of the St. Clair Driving Range on the same Bower Hill Road location during warmer months also are being sought for photographic copying.

(detach here)

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MOUNT LEBANON BY COMPLETING THIS FORM AND FORWARDING TO THE ADDRESS LISTED.

**THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MOUNT LEBANON**  
**P.O. BOX 13423, Pittsburgh, PA 15243**

**Please check applicable membership level:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Individual**      \$20      \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Family**            \$35      \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Benefactor**      \$100     \_\_\_\_\_

**Youth**             \$15      \_\_\_\_\_

**Senior**            \$15      \_\_\_\_\_

**Life**                \$1,000   \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Application \_\_\_\_\_ New ( ) Renewal ( )

*Membership runs January 1 to December 31.*

*Life Memberships are recognized upon payment of total amount within any single 12-mo. period.*

*Names of donors will appear in newsletters and appropriate membership announcements and mailings.*

*The Society is classified as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, charitable organization.*

**Enclosed is my tax-deductible check made payable to: The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon**

